lexicon

NOUN

Etymology

Summary

A borrowing from Latin.

? **modern Latin**, < **Greek** *λεξικόν* (sc. *βιβλίον*), neuter singular of *λεξικός* of or for words, < *λέξις* diction, word, phrase, < *λεγ-* to speak.

Meaning & use

1.a. A word-book or dictionary; chiefly applied to a dictionary of Greek, Hebrew, Syriac, or Arabic. **1566–**

The restricted use is due to the fact that until recently dictionaries of these particular languages were usually in Latin, and in modern Latin *lexicon*, not *dictionarius*, has been the word generally used.

1566 So he leaueth it as he found it in some note boke or Lexicon, that *Missa*, *Princeps*, *Principatus*, are taken not alwaies in one Sense.
J. Rastell, *Treat.: Beware of M. Iewel* ii. viii. sig. Z iij

1603 Any other translation or Lexicon.
C. Heydon, *Defence of Iudiciall Astrologie* ii. 44

1607 He doth not neglect the profit of Lexicons (wherein all sayings and speeches are numbered).
E. Topsell, *Historie of Foure-footed Beastes* Gesnerus to Reader sig. ¶¶v

1616 *Lexicon*, a Greek Dictionarie for words.
J. Bullokar, *English Expositor*

1641 [They] must make a new Lexicon to name themselves by.
J. Milton, *Of Prelatical Episcopacy* 6

1645 They who are so exact for the letter, shall be dealt with by the Lexicon, and the Etymologicon too if they please.
J. Milton, *Tetrachordon: Expositions upon the Foure Chief Places in Scripture, Which Treat of Mariage, or Nullities in Mariage* 64

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Reject and manage

Accept all

1791 He thought it right in a Lexicon of our language to collect many words which had fallen into disuse.
J. Boswell, *Life of Johnson* anno 1750 vol. I. 119

1807 Let Mr. D. go to his Lexicon for the word urethra.
Medical & Physical Journal vol. 17 49

1818 And take for rhyme, to hook my rambling verse on, The first that Walker's Lexicon unravels.
Lord Byron, *Beppo* xlix. 26

1847 A Greek-English Lexicon.
H. G. Liddell & R. Scott (title)

linguistics

1.b. *figurative.* (*a*) The vocabulary proper to some department of knowledge or sphere of activity; the vocabulary or word-stock of a region, a particular speaker, etc. (*b*) A list of words or names. **1647–**

1647 This barbarous Term you will not meet In all Love's Lexicon.
A. Cowley, *Discretion* in *Mistress* 66

1654 Fate, or Fortune, (in the Profane Lexicon, and in the Christians undiscovered Providence).
R. Whitlock, *Ζωοτομία [Zōotomia], or, Observations of the Present Manners of the English: Briefly Anatomizing the Living by the Dead. With an Usefull Detection of the Mountebanks of Both Sexes* 419

1656 The vast and barbarous Lexicon Of Mans Infirmitie.
A. Cowley, *To Dr. Scarborough* in *Pindaric Odes* iii

1720 All Silks, Velvets, Calicoes, and the whole Lexicon of Female Fopperies.
J. Swift, *Proposal Use Irish Manuf.* 5

1751 Such, who, in the Lexicon of Party, may be found ranged under that title [Whig].
Earl of Orrery, *Remarks Swift* (1752) 25

1823 Fifty thousand heroes, name by name..Would form a lengthy lexicon of glory.
Lord Byron, *Don Juan: Canto VIII* xvii. 119

1839 In the lexicon of youth..there is no such word As—fail!
E. Bulwer-Lytton, *Richelieu* ii. ii. 362

1954 'European' in the South African lexicon, means anyone whose skin appears to be white, regardless of where he may have been born or brought up and what his parents may have been.
R. St. John, *Through Malan's Africa* i. i. 12

1963 French-speaking Canadians..are developing a 'standard' form of Canadian French..with the

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1973 These racial-identity labels are part of what can be called 'the black lexicon' (words that are used exclusively by black people) formulated to designate concepts derived from the unique experience of black people within their culture.
K. Johnson in T. Kochman, *Rappin' & Stylin' Out* 142

1973 He [*sc.* Mr. Ehrlichman] said the term 'deep six'—meaning throw in the river—had not been 'part of my lexicon'.
Times 31 July 6/7

linguistics

1.c. *attributive* and in other combinations. **1826–**

1826 The boy who is lexicon-struck in early youth looks upon all books afterwards with horror.
S. Smith, *Works* (1859) vol. II. 100/1

1848 Leaving vocabular ghosts undisturbed in their lexicon-limbo.
A. H. Clough, *Bothie of Toper-na-Fuosich* ix. 149

2. *Linguistics*. The complete set of meaningful units in a language; the words, etc., as in a dictionary, but without the definitions. (opposed to **grammar** *n.*) **1933–**

1933 The total stock of morphemes in a language is its lexicon.
L. Bloomfield, *Language* x. 162

1964 The categories of phonetics, phonology, and grammar are general; the components of the lexicon of a language are particular.
R. H. Robins, *General Linguistics* 63

1968 He can afford to make a less exhaustive classification of the lexicon.
J. Lyons, *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics* iv. 159

linguistics

3. (With capital initial.) The proprietary name of a game played with cards marked with the letters of the alphabet. **1932–**

1932 Lexicon ... Card games. John Waddington Limited,..Leeds; manufacturers.
Trade Marks Journal 22 June 798

1945 This card..was one from a pack of Lexicon cards, one bearing the letter V.

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Guardian 9 December 9/7

1965 One of them produced a packet of Lexicon from her bag and spread the letters over the table.
'R. Petrie', *Running Deep* ii. 28

1974 Smiley appeared to examine the lexicon cards, reading off the words longways and sideways.
'J. le Carré', *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* xxii. 187

games

Pronunciation

BRITISH ENGLISH

/ˈlɛksɬk(ə)n/

LECK-suh-kuhn

U.S. ENGLISH

/ˈlɛksəˌkɑn/

LECK-suh-kahn

/ˈlɛksəkən/

LECK-suh-kuhn

Pronunciation keys

Frequency

lexicon typically occurs about twice per million words in modern written English.

Frequency data is computed programmatically, and should be regarded as an estimate.

Frequency of *lexicon, n.*, 1750–2010

* Occurrences per million words in written English

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Historical frequency series are derived from Google Books Ngrams (version 2), a data set based on the Google Books corpus of several million books printed in English between 1500 and 2010.

The overall frequency for a given word is calculated by summing frequencies for the main form of the word, any plural or inflected forms, and any major spelling variations.

For sets of homographs (distinct entries that share the same word-form, e.g. *mole*, n.[1], *mole*, n.[2], *mole*, n.[3], etc.), we have estimated the frequency of each homograph entry as a fraction of the total Ngrams frequency for the word-form. This may result in inaccuracies.

Smoothing has been applied to series for lower-frequency words, using a moving-average algorithm. This reduces short-term fluctuations, which may be produced by variability in the content of the Google Books corpus.

Frequency of *lexicon, n.*, 2017–2025

* Occurrences per million words in written English

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Smoothing has been applied to series for lower-frequency words, using a moving-average algorithm. This reduces short-term fluctuations, which may be produced by variability in the content of the corpus.

List of compounds & derived words

Sort by Date (oldest first)

synonymicon, n. **1813–**
A list or dictionary of synonyms.

hand lexicon, n. **1814–**

lexiconist, n. **1828–**
A compiler of a lexicon.

lexiconize, v. **1892–**
intransitive. To compile a lexicon.

lexeme, n. **1940–**
A word-like grammatical form intermediate between…

lexon, n. **1964–**
In stratificational grammar, an element of…

lexotactics, n. **1966–**
With singular agreement. The study of the…

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